

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

Claim 1 (canceled)

Claim 2 (currently amended): ~~Panel(s)~~ A plurality of panels according to claim [[1]] 37, wherein the groove (12) and the tongue (6) are each formed on a longitudinal side and on a transverse side of a panel (1, 2) in or on a front surface (17) thereof.

Claim 3 (currently amended): ~~Panel(s)~~ A plurality of panels according to claim [[1]] 37, wherein

- the thickness of the tongue (6) decreases towards the free end, wherein at least one tongue surface (7) is inclined relative to the surface of the panels (1, 2) and
- the wall ~~surface(s)~~ surfaces (15) of the groove (12) ~~extend under the same angle as the~~ have an inclination which corresponds to the inclination of the associated ~~or engaging~~ tongue ~~surface(s)~~ surfaces (7).

Claim 4 (currently amended): ~~Panel(s)~~ A plurality of panels according to claim [[1]] 37, wherein

- the tongue (6) and the groove (12) ~~can be interconnected~~ are interconnectable, at least over part of the surfaces (7, 15) facing each other, in a positive way or with a snug fit, and
and/or
 - at least that area of the tongue (6) which is situated before the bead or web (8) towards the free end of the tongue (6) ~~can be positively inserted~~ is insertable into the groove (12) positively or with a snug fit.

Claim 5 (currently amended): ~~Panel(s)~~ A plurality of panels according to claim [[1]] 37, wherein at least one of the tongue (6), ~~and/or~~ the groove (12), ~~and/or~~ the bead or web (8) ~~and/or~~ or the detent recess (5) extend over the entire length of the respective lateral surface (17), or wherein at least one of the groove (12), ~~and/or~~ the tongue (6), ~~and/or~~ the bead (8) ~~and/or~~ or the detent recess (5) extend in the form of successive, spaced segments or bead segments or recesses along the lateral surface (17).

Claim 6 (currently amended): ~~Panel(s)~~ A plurality of panels according to claim [[1]] 37, wherein part of the bead or web (8) is countersunk in the recess (3).

Claim 7 (currently amended): ~~Panel(s)~~ A plurality of panels according to claim [[1]] 37, wherein the adhesive of the bead or web (8) is at least one of water-soluble, ~~or can be~~ partially ~~dissolved and/or activated~~ dissolvable in water, activatable upon contact with a supply of water ~~and/or~~ or moisture, ~~and/or is~~ formed by a water-soluble glue, ~~e.g. white glue, and/or by~~ a pressure adhesive or an adhesive which develops an adhesive action when pressure is applied or is a pressure-activated adhesive, ~~and/or is~~ formed by a quick-setting or a mounting glue based on polyvinyl acetate ~~and/or~~ or by a commercial wood glue, ~~e.g. based on~~ including at least one of starch ~~and/or~~ or protein.

Claim 8 (currently amended): ~~Panel(s)~~ A plurality of panels according to claim [[1]] 37, wherein the adhesive of the bead or web (8) has [[such]] a hardness, [[or]] tenacity or viscosity so that it withstands insertion of the tongue (6) into the groove (12) or widening of the groove (12) during insertion of the tongue (6) and sliding of the groove leg over it without a substantial ~~remaining permanent~~ change of shape, and wherein [[it]] the bead or web acts as a locking element ~~against escaping preventing an escape~~ of the tongue (6) from the groove (12) after insertion of the tongue (6), ~~optionally as long as up to the moment where an adhesive effect occurs.~~

Claim 9 (currently amended): ~~Panel(s)~~ A plurality of panels according to claim [[1]] 37, wherein

- the legs (13, 14) of the groove (12) have an equal length ~~and/or~~ or
- the leg (14) of the groove (12) which is at the back of the panel (1, 2) is insignificantly shorter than the leg (13) which is near the front surface of the panel (1, 2) ~~and/or~~ or
- at least one leg (13, 14) of the groove (12), preferably the lower leg (14), can be elastically widened or can be elastically bent [[up]] when the tongue (6) is inserted.

Claim 10 (currently amended): ~~Panel(s)~~ A plurality of panels according to claim [[1]] 37, wherein

- the groove (12) and the tongue (6) are formed of the material of the panel (1, 2) or are milled out of it, or
- the tongue (6) is integrally formed of the material of the panel (1, 2).

Claim 11 (currently amended): ~~Panel(s)~~ A plurality of panels according to claim [[1]] 37, wherein in [[the]] a region of ~~the upper surfaces or surfaces~~ of use (18) of two interconnected panels (1, 2) [[the]] areas of [[the]] front surfaces of the panels engage each other ~~and wherein, optionally, a gap (25) is formed in the region of the back (24) of the interconnected panels (1, 2) between the front surfaces (17).~~

Claim 12 (currently amended): ~~Panel(s)~~ A plurality of panels according to claim [[1]] 37, wherein [[the]] a portion (10) of the bead or web (8) which projects from the recess (3) ~~and/or~~ or the detent recess (5) comprises a rounded contour in cross-section, ~~particularly which defines~~ a lens-shaped, half-elliptical or circular contour.

Claim 13 (currently amended): ~~Panel(s)~~ A plurality of panels according to claim [[1]] 37, wherein [[the]] a projecting portion (10) of the bead or web (8) acts as at least one of a detent, a [[or]] locking element ~~and/or~~ as or an element~~[[,]]~~ which develops an adhesive effect.

Claim 14 (canceled)

Claim 15 (currently amended): ~~Panel(s)~~ A plurality of panels according to claim [[1]] 37, wherein the bead or web (8) firmly adheres ~~[[in]]~~ to the recess (3).

Claim 16 (currently amended): ~~Panel(s)~~ A plurality of panels according to claim [[1]] 37, wherein the bead (8), ~~in locked or latched position of~~ when locking or latching the groove (12) and the tongue (6), engages at least one of the detent surface (4) and ~~optionally~~ the groove surface (15), ~~particularly in a position where it engages one of these surfaces in a~~ pressure biasing manner.

Claim 17 (currently amended): ~~Panel(s)~~ A plurality of panels according to claim [[1]] 37, wherein the adhesive bead or web (8) comprises an adhesive-latent adhesive, preferably a polymer adhesive which can be emulsified in water, the adhesive being able to be converted into a condition ready for cementing or for adhesion by moistening with water.

Claim 18 (currently amended): ~~Panel(s)~~ A plurality of panels according to claim [[1]] 37, wherein the plastic material or the adhesive material of the adhesive bead or web (8), ~~which is able to be (re)activated~~ activated by means of water or moisture, and is applied with a substantially uniform layer thickness of 0.5 to 0.9 mm, ~~particularly of 0.6 to 0.8 mm, with having~~ a thickness tolerances tolerance in the range of ± 0.05 to 0.1 mm.

Claim 19 (currently amended): ~~Panel(s)~~ A plurality of panels according to claim [[1]] 37, wherein ~~[[the]]~~ a leg (3) of the groove (12) near ~~[[the]]~~ an upper surface of the panel is made stronger or thicker ~~and/or~~ so as to be ~~[[bent]]~~ bendable in a less elastic manner than ~~[[the]]~~ a lower leg (4), ~~or and/or~~ wherein the bead (8) is only formed on the downwards directed tongue surface (7), while the detent recess (5) is formed only in ~~[[the]]~~ a wall surface of the lower leg (4) of the groove (12).

Claim 20 (canceled)

Claim 21 (currently amended): ~~Panel(s)~~ A plurality of panels according to claim [[1]] 37, wherein the bead (8), ~~in locked position of~~ when the groove (12) and the tongue (6) are

locked to each other, is under a pressure or force bias generated by at least one groove leg (13, 14), which has been widened open when inserting the tongue (6) into the groove (12).

Claim 22 (currently amended): ~~Panel(s)~~ A plurality of panels according to claim [[1]] 37, wherein the bead (8), ~~at least in segments~~, extends parallel to and along [[the]] edges of [[the]] a front surface (17) of the panels or in a longitudinal direction of the panels (1, 2).

Claim 23 (canceled)

Claim 24 (currently amended): ~~Panel(s)~~ A plurality of panels according to claim [[1]] 37, wherein the depth of the recess (3) amounts to ~~30 to 55%, preferably 36 to 48%~~, of the total thickness or height of the bead (8).

Claim 25 (currently amended): ~~Panel(s)~~ A plurality of panels according to claim [[1]] 37, wherein [[the]] a cross-section of [[that]] the portion of the bead (8) which projects from the recess (3) is rounded in a circular, or elliptic elliptical or lens-shaped fashion.

Claim 26 (canceled)

Claim 27 (currently amended): ~~Panel(s)~~ A plurality of panels according to claim [[1]] 37, wherein the detent surface (4) is formed by or results from a prolongation of [[the]] an inner wall surface of the groove or joins to it, and is inclined relative to [[the]] a surface of the panel (1, 2) under at an angle of 95 to 105°, preferably of 97 to 103°, and in particular is perpendicular to the surface.

Claims 28 and 29 (canceled)

Claim 30 (currently amended): ~~Panel(s)~~ A plurality of panels according to claim [[1]] 37, wherein [[that]] a region (32) of the bead (8) [[which]] is next to [[the]] a front surface (17) of the panel (1, 2) comprising the tongue (6) engages the detent surface (4).

Claim 31 (canceled)

Claim 32 (currently amended): ~~Panel(s)~~ A plurality of panels according to claim [[1]] 37, wherein [[the]] a region of the front surfaces (17) of the panels above the groove (12) near [[the]] an upper surface ~~and/or of the panel~~ or the tongue (6) includes a stop (23) for delimiting the insertion of the tongue (6) into the groove (12) ~~wherein at least one spacer (23) is arranged which and which~~ determines [[the]] a distance ~~of the~~ between opposite front surfaces (17) of the panels (1, 2) to be interconnected.

Claim 33 (currently amended): ~~Panel(s)~~ A plurality of panels according to claim [[1]] 37, wherein [[that]] a portion of the groove surface (15) which extends over the recess (3) when the groove (12) and the tongue (6) are latched engages the bead (8).

Claim 34 (canceled)

Claim 35 (currently amended): ~~Panel(s)~~ A plurality of panels according to claim [[1]] 37, wherein the detent recess (5) and the recess (3) and the bead (8) extend at least along a portion parallel to the respective front surface, [[or]] side edge, or to [[the]] a longitudinal direction of the panel (1, 2).

Claim 36 (currently amended): ~~Panel(s)~~ A plurality of panels according to claim [[1]] 37, wherein a free space (30) is formed by the recess (3) between the bead (8) and [[the]] surfaces (31) of the recess (3), which join the tongue surface (7) and extend into [[the]] an interior of the tongue (6).

Claim 37 (new): A plurality of covering panels for floors, walls and ceilings, formed of at least one of wood, wood material, MDF, HDF, plastic material, recycled plastics, artificial resin, bonded chips or particle board, the covering panels to be laid down and joined in a plane and comprising

- a groove (12) along at least one edge or front surface (17) and a tongue (6) along at least one different edge or front surface (17) of each panel,
- the panels (1, 2) being configured to be joined by inserting the tongue (6) into the groove (12) and displacing the panels substantially in the plane in which the panels are to be

laid down,

- a bead or web (8) of an adhesive and/or of plastic material being preapplied in a factory to at least one tongue surface (7) of each panel,

- a recess (3) having a triangular cross-section formed in a surface of the tongue, the bead or web (8) of an adhesive and/or of plastic material being partially disposed in the recess,

- the recess (3) being formed in a portion of the tongue (6) which slopingly extends relative to a face surface (18) of the plate (1, 2) or by a portion of a surface (7) of the tongue which slopingly extends relative to the face surface (18) of the plate,

- a wall surface (7) defined by the groove (12) including a detent recess (5) bounded by a detent surface (4) into which the bead or web (8) extends, the detent recess receiving and surrounding a portion of the bead or web protruding from the recess (3) so that, upon insertion of the tongue (6) into the groove (12), the bead or web (8) and the detent surface (4) of two adjacent connected plates become secured to each other, and

- the recess (3) having a depth of between 30 to 55% of a thickness of the bead or web (8),

- wherein the detent surface (4) is formed by a direct extension of an inner surface (15) of the groove, and

- wherein, in the assembled state of the plates, the groove (12) and tongue (6) between the bead or web (8) and a rounded transition wall surface (21) between the inner surface (5) of the groove and the detent surface (4) define a moon-shaped gap 21.

Claim 38 (new): A system for covering a flat surface with panels that are joined edge-to-edge, the system comprising

a plurality of panels, each panel having spaced-apart, parallel longitudinal edges and spaced-apart, parallel transverse edges, a tongue projecting from one of the longitudinal edges and from one of the transverse edges, and a groove shaped to receive the tongues and formed in the other longitudinal edge and the other transverse edge arranged so that cooperating tongues and grooves can be joined to each other by moving the panels in the plane of the flat

surface,

a surface of each tongue of a given panel defining a recess which faces an opposing surface defined by the respective grooves of other panels that are to be joined to the given panel, each groove of the other panels terminating in an inner groove end, the respective recesses facing the respective opposing surfaces defined by the groove of the other panels, and a nose which extends in a longitudinal direction of each tongue and is arranged on a side of the recess that is remote from an inner end of the associated groove,

the groove of each panel defining a chamfer projection positioned substantially opposite the nose when the panels are in their assembled state which forms a detent recess remote from the inner end of the groove, and

a bead made of an adhesive, plastically deformable material applied to the recess in each tongue of the panels, the bead being dimensioned so that when placed in the recess the bead projects past the recess,

the nose and the chamfer projection being configured and dimensioned so that upon full insertion of the tongue of the given panel into the groove of another panel, the nose and the chamfer projection remain spaced apart in a direction perpendicular to the plane of the flat surface so that the nose and chamfer projection can move past each other without contacting each other during insertion of the tongue into the groove, and so that when the panels are in their assembled state, the bead extends from the recess into the detent recess and maintains joined panels in edge-to-edge contact by mechanically and adhesively securing the tongue of the given panel to the groove of the other panel.